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ABSTRACT

This study describes the job goals and communication patterns of staff in a coalition of student personnel offices at a large urban university. The sample was comprised of 174 professional staff members in 15 different offices that are part of the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs at the University of Minnesota (Twin Cities). Results of the study indicated that a majority of staff endorsed ten common job goals. These included both general educational goals and more specific service goals. A majority of the staff from other offices in the coalition perceived their job goals as similar to those of the staff in the Campus Assistance Center, Student Counseling Bureau, Orientation Office and the International Student Adviser's Office. The Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs, Special Counseling Office (Discipline), Parents' Association, and the Campus Assistance Center initiated communication most frequently with more offices in the coalition. (Author)

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Student Personnel Services In a Contemporary University

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Student Life Studies
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Abstract

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Results of the study indicated that a majority of staff endorsed ten common job goals. These included both general educational goals and more specific service goals. A majority of the staff from other offices in the coalition perceived their job goals as similar to those of the staff in the Campus Assistance Center, Student Counseling Bureau, Orientation Office and the International Student Adviser's Office. The Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs, Special Counseling Office (Discipline), Parents' Association and the Campus Assistance Center initiated communication most frequently with more offices in the coalition.

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Student personnel services in universities have evolved from small groups of people with common objectives and frequent and active communication to that of coalitions of student personnel offices with specialized objectives and varying amounts of communication among staffs from different offices. If such coalitions of student personnel offices are to function effectively, staff members in different offices should perceive themselves as sharing some common job goals in addition to their specialized goals. At times, staff members should be willing to subordinate their personal goals to those of the coalition. When staff members in different offices perceive their job goals as quite different from staff in other offices, the coalition is apt to be characterized by uncoordinated or duplicated services. Furthermore, the effective functioning of the coalition requires that staff in different offices are part of one or more active and common communication systems. When staff in different offices are not part of any common communication systems or they have little communication with each other, they are apt to view their offices as isolated from each other and not as a part of the same administrative organization.

This study examines the following questions: (1) What are the job goals of student personnel staff members? (2) What are the clusters of student personnel offices with similar patterns of job goals? (3) How frequently do student personnel staff in different offices perceive themselves as having job goals in common with staff in other student personnel offices? (4) How frequently do staff in different student personnel offices communicate with each other? (5) What are the clusters of student personnel offices with similar patterns of inter-office communication? The focus of the study is the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs at the University of Minnesota, created in

1968. Four large offices were included in the coalition: Minnesota Unions, the Dean of Students' Office, the University Health Service and the Admissions and Records office. Each of these large offices has several smaller bureaus and offices.

Method

Sample

The sample was composed of the 174 professional staff members in 15 different offices in the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs at the University of Minnesota. Eighty-five percent (N=148) of them completed the questionnaire. The lowest rate of returns (55%) was from the University Health Service. The return rate from the rest of the offices was 78% or greater. Sixty-six percent of the sample were males, and fifty-eight percent were over thirty-five years of age. Thirty-six percent had received a Doctoral degree, thirty-two percent had received a terminal Masters degree, and twenty-one percent had some post-Baccalaureate education but less than a Masters degree. Forty-five percent indicated their major academic area was Psychology or Education and twelve percent said their major academic area had been Medicine. The academic backgrounds of the rest of the staff were diversified.

Questionnaire

The survey questionnaire consisted of fity-eight items and questions. The first set of questions concerned socio-demographic information. Staff members indicated age, sex, highest level of academic achievement, and major area of academic concern.

The next set of questions asked about the importance of nineteen different student personnel job goals. Respondents indicated how important (1=very important, 2= somewhat important, 3=neutral, 4=somewhat unimportant, 5=very unimportant) was each of the nineteen goals in their present job. The

majority of the goal statements were adapted from those developed in the Task Force Report on the Future of Student Development and Student Affairs at Ohio State University (June 1972) and a few goal statements were taken from a Student Personnel Long-Range Planning Report (1972) developed at Indiana University. Second, respondents reported on a five-point scale how similar (1=very similar, 3=undecided, 5=very different) the goals of their job were to those of student personnel staff in other offices. Third, they reported how frequently (1= every day, 2=several times a week, 3=several times a month, 4=less than once a month, 5=less than twice a year) they communicated with staff members in other student personnel offices.

Statistical Methodology

For each office, means and standard deviations were computed for the job goals, perceived similarity of job goals, and ratings of frequency of communication with other student personnel offices.

Product-moment correlations were computed among the mean office ratings for each of the job goals for the fourteen different offices. The matrix of inter-correlations among office means was then cluster analyzed (McQuitty, 1960), and offices were grouped into clusters according to the similarity of their job goals.

Product-moment correlations were computed between the mean office ratings of frequency of communication with all other offices in the coalition. This matrix of inter-correlations among office means was then cluster analyzed (McQuitty, 1960), and offices were grouped into clusters based on the similarity of their patterns of inter-office communication.

In both cluster analyses, a minimum Pearson r of approximately .41 between two offices in a cluster was used as a limit for defining meaningful clusters. For this size sample, this r is statistically significant at the .05 level.

Results

Job Goals

Table 1 describes how important student personnel staff members considered nineteen job goals. A majority endorsed ten common job goals. A large majority considered identifying student needs, providing services which help students benefit from their classroom experiences, minimizing difficulties students have in their transition from high school to college and providing individual and group counseling to be important goals of their jobs.

Insert Table 1

The results of hierarchical cluster analysis of student personnel offices based on their common job goals are described in Table 2. Most of the offices can be grouped into three clusters. The first cluster includes the Minnesota Women's Center, Special Counseling (Discipline), Unions and Activities, and Student Life Studies (Research). The second cluster includes Admissions and Records, Special Programs (Minorities), Student Financial Aid, Vice President for Student Affairs Office, International Student Adviser's Office, and the Student Counseling Bureau. A third cluster includes the University Health Service, Campus Assistance Center, and the Housing Office. The Parents' Association could not be grouped into any cluster of offices based on similarity of job goals.

Insert Table 2

The staff judged how similar their job goals were to those of the staff in the other student personnel offices. Sixty-two percent of the staff from other offices considered their goals similar to those of the staff in the Campus Assistance Center, Student Counseling Bureau, and the Orientation Office.

Fifty-two percent of the staff in other offices considered their goals similar to those of the International Student Adviser's Office. By way of contrast, sixty-one percent of the staff from other offices considered their goals different from those of the Parents' Association, fifty-seven percent considered their goals different from those of Admissions and Records, fifty-six percent considered their goals different from those of the University Health Service, and fifty percent considered their goals different from those of the Union-Activities Centers.

Table 3 lists the offices perceived to have similar (scores 1 - 2.5) and dissimilar (scores 3.5 - 5.0) job goals both as perceived by staff in the office and by staff in other offices. Staff of the Student Counseling Bureau perceived no other student personnel offices as having similar job goals while eight offices perceived themselves as having similar job goals to the Student Counseling Bureau. Only Student Life Studies and Parents' Association perceived their job goals as different from the Student Counseling Bureau. Staff of the University Health Service perceived no other student personnel offices as having similar job goals and only the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs perceived themselves as having similar job goals to the Health Service. Staff of the Student Counseling Bureau and the staff of the Health Service perceived their goals as different from those of the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs. Housing Office, Financial Aid, and Special Programs perceived themselves to have goals in common with a number of other student personnel offices.

Insert Table 3

Communication among Student Personnel Offices

Table 4 lists each office and those other offices in the coalition with which the staff have reported frequent (mean = 1.0 to 3.0), moderate (mean = 3.1 to 4.0), and low (mean = 4.1 to 5.0) communication. The Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs, Special Counseling (Discipline), Parents' Association, and

Campus Assistance Center reported frequent communication with most other offices. The University Health Service, Admissions and Records, and the Student Counseling Bureau reported least frequent communication with most other offices. These are all offices having fairly large numbers of staff and thus communication with other offices may be more specialized. Although the University Health Service reported infrequent communication with most offices in the coalition, three offices reported frequent communication with them and four more offices reported moderate communication with them. The Student Counseling Bureau has a similar pattern of communication with other offices in the coalition. Their staff reported infrequent communication with other offices, but five offices reported frequent communication with the Student Counseling Bureau, and five other offices reported moderate communication with them.

The Campus Assistance Center reported more frequent communication with the Student Counseling Bureau and the University Health Service than either of these two offices reported communicating with the Campus Assistance Center. Special Counseling reported communicating more frequently with Student Counseling Bureau and Housing Office than either of these two offices reported communicating with Special Counseling. The Vice President's Office reported communicating more frequently with the Student Financial Aid Office and the Student Counseling Bureau than these two offices reported communicating with the Central Office.

Insert Table 4

The results of a hierarchical cluster analysis of student personnel offices based on their common patterns of frequency of inter-office communication are shown in Table 5. One cluster of offices with a common pattern of inter-office communication includes Parents' Association, Student Life Studies (Research), Vice President for Student Affairs Office, Minnesota Women's Center, and the Campus Assistance Center. A second cluster of offices with a common pattern of inter-office communication includes Student Financial Aid, Special Programs

(Minorities) and Admissions and Records. The third cluster of offices with a common pattern of inter-office communication includes Housing and Special Counseling. Unions and Student Activities, International Student Adviser's Office, Student Counseling Bureau and University Health Service could not be classified into any meaningful clusters according to a common pattern of inter-office communication.

Insert Table 5

Discussion and Conclusion

This study examined job goals of staff members in a coalition of student personnel offices which are part of the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs at the University of Minnesota. A majority of staff endorsed ten job goals. Even though a majority of staff in different offices endorsed this number of goals as being important in their jobs, staff perceptions in different offices of whether or not they had similar or dissimilar job goals to staff in other offices in the coalition varied considerably. In some cases the staff in offices perceived no other offices in the coalition as having job goals similar to their own, yet a majority from other offices perceived themselves as having job goals similar to the staff in those offices. Organizational problems in the coalition may result if staff in a particular office perceive their own job goals as different from the job goals attributed to them by staff in other offices. This situation could be an indication of conflicting role expectations among staff in different student personnel offices. In other cases, the situation was somewhat different. The staff in offices perceived their job goals as different from the staff in all other offices, and the staff in the majority of other offices perceived their job goals as different from the staff in those offices. Offices in the coalition could become isolated because their staff members perceive their job goals as very different from other offices and staff in other offices agree.

Offices in the coalition can be grouped into three clusters based on the similarity of their job goals. The Parents' Association was the only office which could not be grouped into any meaningful cluster. The three clusters of offices have no obvious meanings. However, the results do suggest that the coalition of offices appears to represent three rather distinct groups of offices whose average staff members endorsed similar job goals. Future research might examine those factors which are related to these or other such clusters of offices.

Communication among staff in different offices varied considerably. The coalition has three groups of offices with similar patterns of communication with other offices in the coalition. One cluster of offices with a common pattern of inter-office communication included three offices on the same floor of a building and two other offices in nearby buildings. These offices in the cluster have smaller numbers of staff than some other offices in the coalition and they tend to communicate more frequently with other offices in the coalition. The second cluster of offices with a common pattern of inter-office communication includes three offices concerned with financial aid counseling, admissions and records and counseling minority students. These offices focus some of their efforts in helping students with practical matters concerning academic processes at the University. The third cluster of offices with a common pattern of inter-office communication includes two offices concerned with housing and discipline. These offices focus some of their efforts on helping students with problems concerning social controls. Some offices are not part of any group of offices with a common pattern of inter-office communication.

Generalizations from this study should be made cautiously. In some analyses, mean scores for staff have been used to represent offices. Since the offices differ considerably in the size of their staffs, the variability within offices can be considerable.

TABLE 1

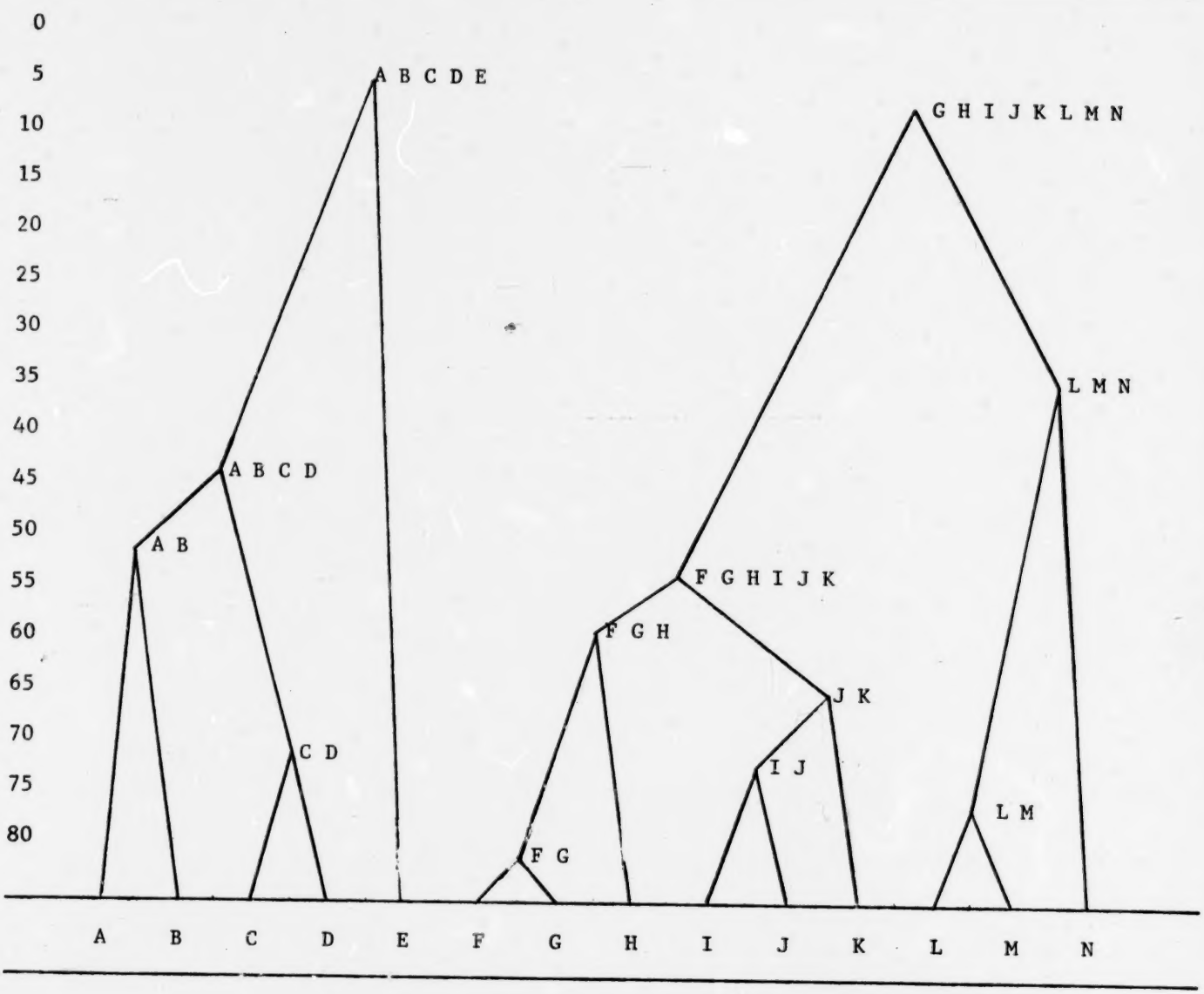
JOB GOALS

OF STUDENT PERSONNEL STAFF MEMBERS

	GOALS	IMPORTANT	NEUTRAL	UNIMPORTANT
1.	Identify student needs.	94%	3%	2%
2.	Provide services which help students benefit from their classroom experiences.	84%	9%	6%
3.	Minimize the difficulties in transition from high school and other institutions to the University.	79%	10%	10%
4.	Provide individual and group counseling.	78%	11%	10%
5.	Insure student grievances are given a fair hearing.	75%	10%	14%
6.	Provide services for students with special needs.	74%	10%	15%
7.	Provide information, advice and counseling which will help students make career decisions.	70%	11%	19%
8.	Provide services for students who are having difficulties with other University offices.	67%	17%	16%
9.	Encourage student participation in governance.	52%	21%	27%
10.	Provide assistance for students in financial need.	51%	19%	30%
11.	Minimize the potential for violence.	50%	29%	21%
12.	Maximize the educational potential of participation in student organizations.	48%	28%	23%
13.	Minimize the impact of health problems on students.	48%	19%	33%
14.	Maximize student concern for contemporary social issues.	43%	31%	25%
15.	Provide for out-of-classroom interaction between faculty and students.	39%	32%	29%
16.	Maximize parental support for students in their educational experience.	37%	30%	33%
17.	Provide resources for reading and study skill improvement.	36%	24%	40%
18.	Generate housing opportunities for students.	35%	22%	43%
19.	Provide recreational opportunities for students.	30%	24%	46%

TABLE 2

CLUSTERS OF STUDENT PERSONNEL OFFICES
WITH SIMILAR JOB GOALS



KEY:

A = Minnesota Women's Center
B = Special Counseling Office
C = Union - Student Activities
D = Student Life Studies
E = Parents' Association
F = Admissions and Records
G = Special Programs (MLK)
H = Student Financial Aid
I = Vice President for Student Affairs
J = International Student Adviser's Office
K = Student Counseling Bureau
L = University Health Service
M = Campus Assistance Center
N = Housing Office

TABLE 3

Perceived Similarity of Job Goals for Staff
in Different Student Personnel Offices

Office Name	Perceived by Office as Having Similar Goals (Score 1-2.50)	Perceived by Office as Having Different Goals (Score 3.5-5.0)	Perceived by Other Offices as Having Similar Goals (Score 1-2.5)	Perceived by Other Offices as Having Different Goals (Score 3.5-5.0)
Admissions and Records (AR)	VPSA, Sp Progs	UHS	VPSA, Sp Progs	CAC, MWC, Union-Act, Parents, Sp Cslng, SLS, UHS
Campus Assistance Center (CAC)	MWC, SCB	Housing, Parents, Sp Progs, SFA, AR	Housing, ISAO, MWC, Union-Act, VPSA, Sp Progs, SFA	Parents, SLS, Sp Cslng
Housing	CAC, ISAO, VPSA, Sp Cslng, SCB, SFA	Parents	VPSA, Sp Progs	CAC, MWC, Union-Act, Parents, Sp Cslng, SCB, SLS UHS
International Student Adviser's Office (ISAO)	CAC, Union-Act, Sp Cslng, SCB	Parents	Housing, MWC, Union-Act, VPSA, SFA	Parents, Sp Cslng, SLS, UHS, Sp Progs
Minnesota Women's Center (MWC)	CAC, ISAO, Sp Progs, SCB	AR, Housing, Union-Act, Parents, Sp Cslng, SFA, SLS, UHS	CAC, VPSA	Parents, Sp Cslng, Sp Progs, SLS, UHS

TABLE 3 (cont.)

Office Name	Perceived by Office as Having Similar Goals (Score 1-2.50)	Perceived by Office as Having Different Goals (Score 3.5-5.0)	Perceived by Other Offices as Having Similar Goals (Score 1-2.5)	Perceived by Other Offices as Having Different Goals (Score 3.5-5.0)
Union - Student Activities	CAC,	AR, Housing, Parents, Sp Cslng, SFA, UHS	VPSA, ISAO	MWC, Parents, Sp Cslng, SCB, UHS
Vice President for Student Affairs (VPSA)	AR, CAC, Housing, ISAO, MWC, Union-Act, Parents, Sp Cslng, Sp Progs, SCB, SFA, SLS, UHS		AR, Housing, Parents, SFA, SLS	SCB, UHS
Parents' Association	VPSA	AR, CAC, Housing, ISAO, MWC, Union-Act, Sp Cslng, Sp. Progs, SCB, SFA, SLS, UHS	VPSA	CAC, Housing, ISAO, MWC, Union-Act, Sp Cslng, Sp Progs, SCB SLS, UHS
Special Counseling Office (discipline) (Sp Cslng)		AR, CAC, Housing, ISAO, MWC, Union-Act, Parents, SFA, SLS, UHS	Housing, ISAO, VPSA, Sp Progs, SFA	MWC, Union-Act, Parents, SLS
Special Programs (minorities) (Sp Progs)	AR, CAC, Housing, Sp Cslng, SCB, SFA	ISAO, MWC, Parents, SLS, UHS	AR, MWC, VPSA, Sp Progs, SFA	CAC, Parents, SLS UHS

TABLE 3 (cont.)

Office Name	Perceived by Office as Having Similar Goals (Score 1-2.50)	Perceived by Office as Having Different Goals (Score 3.5-5.0)	Perceived by Other Offices as Having Similar Goals (Score 1-2.50)	Perceived by Other Offices as Having Different Goals (Score 3.5-5.0)
Student Counseling Bureau (SCB)		Housing, Union-Act, VPSA, Parents, SFA, SLS	CAC, Housing, ISAO, MWC, VPSA, Sp Progs, SFA	Parents, SLS
Student Financial Aids (SFA)	CAC, ISAO, VPSA, Sp Progs, SCB	SLS	Housing, VPSA, Sp Progs	CAC, MWC, Union-Act, Parents, Sp Cslng, SCB, SLS, UHS
Student Life Studies (SLS)	VPSA	AR, CAC, Housing, ISAO, MWC, Parents, Sp Cslng, Sp Progs, SCB, SFA, UHS	VPSA	MWC, Parents, Sp Cslng, UHS, SFA, SCB, Sp Progs
University Health Service (UHS)		AR, Housing, ISAO, MWC, Union-Act, VPSA, Parents, Sp Progs, SFA, SLS	VPSA	AR, MWC, Union-Act, Parents, Sp Cslng, SLS, Sp Progs

TABLE 4

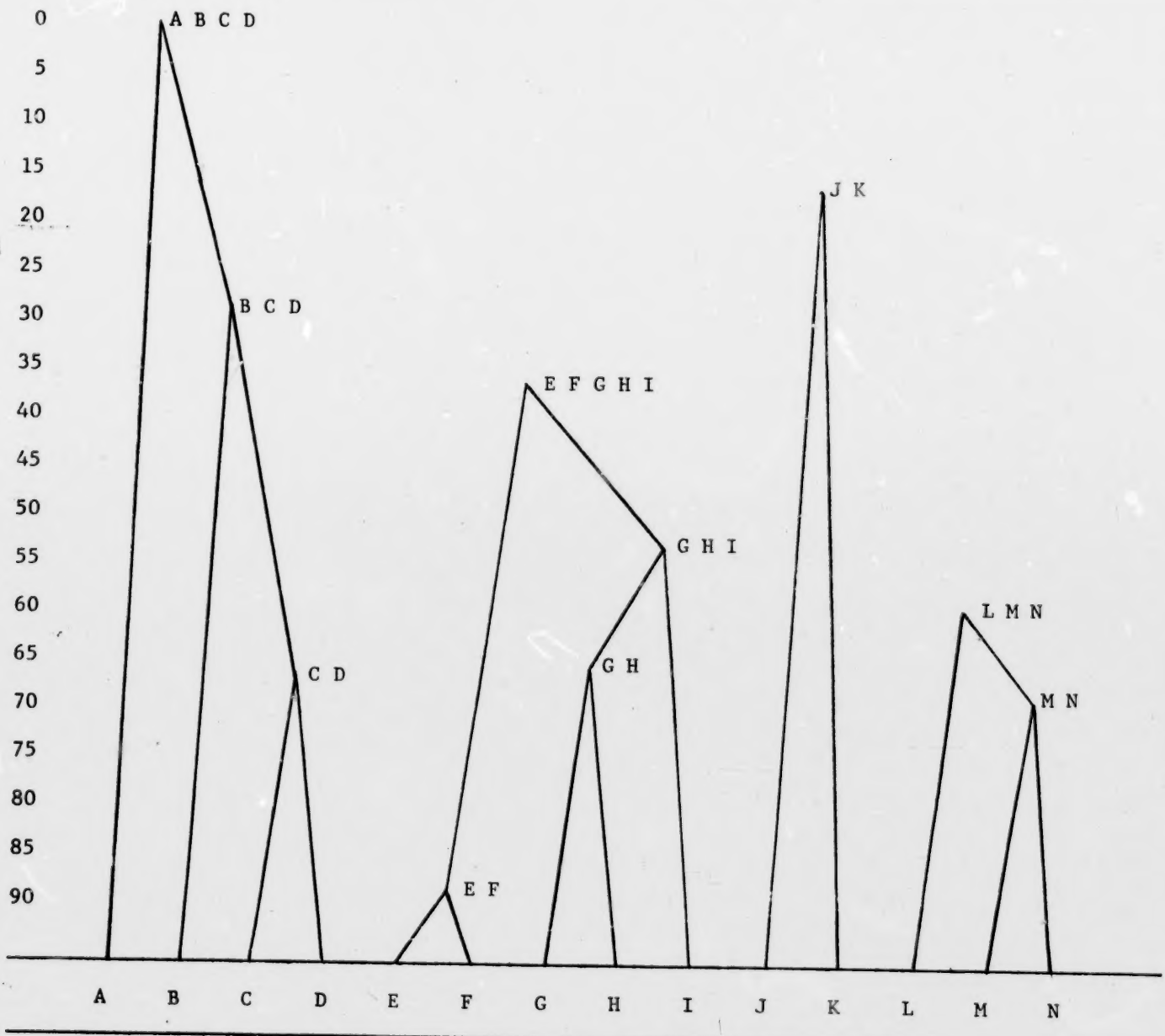
Frequency with which Staff in Various Student Personnel Offices Communicated with Staff in Other Coalition Offices

Offices	Frequent Communication (1:0-3:0) Every Day-Several Times a Month	Moderate Communication (3:1-4:0) Several Times a Month to Less than Once a Month	Low Communication (4.1-5.0) Less than once a month to less than twice a year
Admissions and Records (AR)		ISAO, VPSA, Sp Progs, SCB, SFA	CAC, Housing, MWC, Union-Act Parents, Sp Cslng, SLS, UHS
Campus Assistance Center (CAC)	AR, Union-Act, VPSA, SCB, SFA, UHS	Housing, ISAO, MWC, Sp Cslng, SLS	Parents, Sp Progs
Housing		AR, CAC, ISAO, Sp Cslng, SCB, SFA	MWC, Union-Act, VPSA, Parent Sp Progs, SLS, UHS
International Student Adviser's Office (ISAO)	SFA	AR, CAC, Housing, Union-Act, VPSA, SCB, UHS	MWC, Parents, Sp Cslng, Sp Progs, SLS
Minnesota Women's Center (MWC)	CAC, VPSA, SCB, SLS, UHS	AR, ISAO, Union-Act, SFA	Housing, Parents, Sp Cslng, Sp Progs
Union - Student Activities		CAC, VPSA, SLS	AR, Housing, ISAO, MWC, Parents, Sp Cslng, Sp Progs, SCB, SFA, UHS

TABLE 4 (cont.)

Offices	Frequent Communication (1:0-3:0) Every Day-Several Times a Month	Moderate Communication (3:1-4.0) Several Times a Month to Less than Once a Month	Low Communication (4.1-5.0) Less than Once a Month to Less than Twice a Year
University Health Service (UHS)			AR, CAC, Housing, ISAO, MWC, Union-Act, VPSA, Parents, Sp Cslng, Sp Progs, SCB, SFA, SLS
Vice President for Student Affairs (VPSA)	AR, CAC, MWC, Housing, Union-Act, ISAO, Parents, Sp Progs, SCB, SFA, SLS	Sp Cslng, UHS	
Parents' Association	CAC, ISAO, MWC, VPSA, SCB, SFA, SLS	AR, Union-Act, UHS	Housing, Sp Cslng, Sp Progs
Special Counseling Office (discipline)	AR, Housing, ISAO, VPSA, SCB, SFA, UHS	CAC, SLS, Union-Act	MWC, Sp Progs, Parents
Special Programs (Minorities) (Sp Progs)	AR, Union-Act, VPSA, SFA	SLS	CAC, Housing, ISAO, MWC, Parents, Sp Cslng, SCB, UHS
Student Counseling Bureau (SCB)		AR, SFA	CAC, Housing, ISAO, MWC, Union-Act, VPSA, Parents, Sp Cslng, Sp Progs, SLS, UHS
Student Financial Aids (SFA)		Housing, ISAO, Sp Progs, SCB, AR	CAC, MWC, Union-Act, VPSA, Parents, Sp Cslng, SLS, UHS
Student Life Studies (SLS)	AR, Union-Act, VPSA, Parents	CAC, Housing, ISAO, MWC, Sp Cslng, Sp Progs, SCB, SFA, UHS	

CLUSTERS OF STUDENT PERSONNEL OFFICES
WITH SIMILAR PATTERNS OF INTER-OFFICE COMMUNICATION



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